

***Published in the Ramona Sentinel, Alpine Sun and Poway Chieftain on August 21, 2009***

All across the country, Americans are demonstrating outright opposition to the one-thousand page health care proposal under consideration by the House of Representatives. People are justifiably frustrated with what is clearly an attempt to impose a government-run health care system that unfairly penalizes taxpayers and businesses, impedes consumer access and limits the availability of quality care for those who need it most.

My opposition to the health care proposal in the House is based on several factors, not the least being the extraordinary and verifiably unsustainable costs associated with the plan. Like so many others, I am also concerned with the foreseeable consequences of a federally managed, bureaucratically controlled insurance exchange.

There is no disagreement that health care reform is critical to our nation's long-term economic outlook and, perhaps more importantly, the general well-being of the American people. While controlling health care costs is among the primary reasons why reform is immediately needed, the plan debated so far in three separate House committees takes us in the complete opposite, not to mention wrong direction.

Even those who agree with President Obama and Congressional Democrats about the importance of controlling health care costs find it impossible to support any plan that includes an expansive public option. That is because, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, health care costs under the public option are projected to exceed \$1.5 trillion in the first ten years. Each year after that, costs would then rise at least 6 percent, adding trillions of dollars more to record federal debt levels.

Beyond this increase in spending, which relies mostly on revenue generated from taxes on small businesses, it is estimated that anywhere between one and five million jobs will be lost. This outcome, resulting from onerous and costly federal mandates, must be avoided at all cost.

Proponents of the public option contend that a government imposed system will actually help create jobs despite raising taxes on small businesses by more than \$800 million. They erroneously argue that the plan put forward is intended to curtail health care costs, even though the Congressional Budget Office says they are wrong. The numbers just don't add up.

Until we control spending, health care costs will only continue to rise. Failure to restrain spending or unwisely increase costs under a public option would not just have severe economic implications. It would also perpetuate the rationing of care, a predictable outcome that is common in countries that support a nationalized health care system, such as England and Canada.

Instead, we can quickly limit costs and increase individual control over health coverage by making it easier for consumers to purchase insurance for themselves. One way to accomplish this is to allow people to buy insurance across state lines. We can also use the tax code to our advantage, encouraging consumers to buy the best plan for their needs, rather than the most expensive policies. This would help people buy cheaper but more secure coverage. We must also focus on medical liability reform, an initiative that could significantly constrain defensive medicine practices and save hundreds-of-billions of dollars in the process.

Of course, these are just a few examples of steps we can take on our way towards achieving comprehensive reform. That is not to say, however, that the private marketplace should be exempt from coinciding action. The private insurance market is also a candidate for serious reform. People should not be denied coverage based on pre-existing conditions, just as health care coverage should not be so expensive that it essentially becomes out of reach for millions of people.

All of this is possible without creating a government-run system that denies choice, limits access and increases cost. There are better ways forward, all of which deserve equal consideration before Democrats in Congress and the Obama Administration continue their push for a public option.

It is also unfortunate that, amidst the current health care debate, the legislation expected to be voted on by the House sometime next month includes sizeable loopholes that likely open the public exchange to illegal immigrants and encourage insurances providers to offer abortion

services. Opening the exchange to these benefits and services is a point of significant concern for many taxpayers, and rightfully so.

In town halls and forums across America, people are standing up against this health care plan. Given the plan moving forward in Congress, it is understandable why. This isn't the health care reform they want or deserve.